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YOU DON'T SAY...

"This is not healthy and it is not a responsible way to operate."

Sen. Dan Blue, D-Wake, on a nonpartisan forecast that says state expenses are expected to grow faster than revenue starting in 2019.

THE NEWS & OBSERVER, 7/10/17

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News Summary

Election Boards

While the state doesn't currently have an elections and ethics board, most county elections boards are still able to conduct business with their old board members.

The merger of the state's elections and ethics boards took effect in June after judges ruled against Gov. Roy Cooper, who argues that the law creating the State Board of Elections and Ethics Enforcement is unconstitutional. Cooper is awaiting a decision from the N.C. Supreme Court on his latest request to block the merger, and so far he hasn't appointed any members to the new board, keeping it vacant.

But under the agency's interpretation of the law, county election boards still have the members who served before the law changed. The new law sets Tuesday as the deadline for the new state board to appoint county board members -- two from each political party -- but there's no state board to make those appointments. Six counties, however, can't hold board of elections meetings because one of their old board members resigned and hasn't been replaced. With only two people on the board in those six counties, the board doesn't have the quorum required to conduct business. And in the 94 counties that have three-member boards, all decisions must be unanimous because the new law requires three out of four board members to back any actions taken. That could create difficulties as the municipal election filing period continues this month, because county boards typically address any challenges to a candidate's eligibility. In the six counties with no elections board, "you could have the Court of Appeals hearing the first review" of any challenge, said Josh Lawson, an attorney for the state elections and ethics agency. The vacant state board also leaves the agency's staff in charge of addressing an election problem in Cleveland County, where a new law creating partisan school board elections leaves an unaffiliated incumbent unable to seek re-election. Legislators say they made a mistake in passing the law without adjusting a deadline for unaffiliated candidates in partisan elections to submit signatures to get on the ballot. That deadline occurred just hours after the law was enacted. Elections officials in Cleveland County are allowing the unaffiliated candidate to obtain petition materials while the confusion is addressed, potentially through legislation that could extend the petition deadline until September.

Kim Strach, the director of the State Board of Elections and Ethics Enforcement, voiced support for that approach in an email Monday. "Despite the school board not being a municipal office, the deadline for unaffiliated candidates seeking ballot access in a school board contest this year clearly should coincide with the deadline for other unaffiliated candidates seeking ballot access in partisan municipal elections, which would place the deadline on September 22," Strach wrote to Cleveland County officials. "Please be certain that I will make all efforts possible to ensure unaffiliated candidates seeking ballot access by petition this year have the opportunity to do so."

State elections and ethics agency staffers are also working to combine their office spaces under a provision in the recently approved state budget. The budget requires the N.C. Department of Administration to find state-owned or leased office space for the newly merged agency, which will also include lobbying compliance staff starting later this year. Those staffers, currently in the Secretary of State's office, will join the new agency this fall unless the law is overturned or blocked. The combined agency needs about 25,000 square feet of office space, which is more than what's available at the elections board's Harrington Street headquarters. Even if the law is overturned, the budget provision requires the elections, ethics and lobbying staff to work in the same facility. Lawson said the move will allow the staff to "take advantage of the efficiencies created by a merger." "Our agency is committed to a successful merger until we hear otherwise from the courts," he added. (Colin Campbell, THE INSIDER, 7/11/17).

Budget Gap

The newly approved North Carolina budget with its tax cut plan could contribute to a \$1 billion-plus annual gap between revenues and projected government expenses by 2020, according to an analysis by the General Assembly's nonpartisan staff.

The shortfalls were projected in the analysis requested by state Senate Democrats and received a week after the legislature adjourned their annual work session June 30. Republicans said Monday the gaps won't happen or are getting covered by careful spending. The GOP pointed to revenue surpluses since 2015. They attributed those to economic growth, lower tax rates passed since they took command of the legislature, as well as tight spending. They say flush emergency reserves also will help.

For Democrats, however, the report reinforces their viewpoint that the tax changes they opposed would blow holes in future budgets, requiring spending cuts, higher taxes or a combination to balance them. While the latest tax reductions benefit nearly all taxpayers, Democratic Gov. Roy Cooper vetoed the budget with the cuts contained inside in part because they gave breaks to the wealthy and to corporations. Republicans overrode the veto.

"The numbers are clear -- tax cuts have taken priority over our state's core responsibilities," Senate Minority Leader Dan Blue of Wake County said in an emailed statement Monday.

Republicans who wrote up the spending and tax plans say they won't spend at the 4 and 5 percent growth rate envisioned in the five-year report generated by the Fiscal Research Division. They also said they will keep to fiscal conservatism to cover necessary government services.

"We are not projecting that kind of growth in government spending because we are not going to automatically spend every dime we get our hands on," said Rep. Bill Brawley of Mecklenburg County, a House Finance Committee senior co-chairman. The three chief bond-rating houses also recently reaffirmed their top credit ratings for North Carolina, noting its economic outlook and ability to address downturns quickly.

The tax provisions reduce the individual income rate from 5.499 percent today to 5.25 percent in 2019 and lower the corporate income tax from 3 percent now to 2.5 percent in 2019. Standard deductions also would grow by \$1,000 to \$2,500, depending on filing status. There are other small changes.

The analysis is based on a baseline of revenues agreed to previously by economists at the General Assembly and Cooper's state budget office through mid-2019, followed by a 10-year average of revenue growth. Expenditures would cover the "current level of services," including inflation and school enrollment growth.

The report estimated a \$1.19 billion difference between revenues and expenditures in the 2019-20 fiscal year, growing to \$1.37 billion in 2020-21 and \$1.43 billion in 2021-22. The gaps equal at least 5 percent of total anticipated revenues.

In an attachment with the analysis, the Fiscal Research Division downplayed specific numbers but wrote that the forecast is designed "to predict potential gaps in revenue and spending streams assuming current policies remain unchanged."

The division offered Senate Democrats several potential ways lawmakers could close shortfalls, including restricting spending increases for Medicaid and salaries and health care for state employees. Income tax reductions set for 2019 also could be repealed, the report said.

"Our track record of spending restraint and middle-class tax relief has led to consecutive budget surpluses and a booming economy," said a release from Amy Auth, a spokeswoman for Senate Republicans. The statement criticized Democrats for multibillion shortfalls when they led state government. (Gary D. Robertson, THE ASSOCIATED PRESS, 7/10/17).

Finance Bill

Consumer advocacy groups are sounding the alarm about a bill that was pushed through the legislature at the behest of the consumer finance industry and is now on Gov. Roy Cooper's desk. An industry spokesman counters that the measure merely clarifies the existing law and questions why consumer groups are raising a fuss. The spokesman also defended the industry's treatment of consumers. "If we weren't fair to our consumers, we would not be in business," said R.E. Everette, chair of the legislative committee of the Resident Lenders of North Carolina, which represents independently owned consumer finance companies in the state. Everette owns the Greenville-based Time Financing Service, which has 24 offices across North Carolina.

It's unclear how the governor views the bill. A spokesman for Cooper, Ford Porter, said that the measure, HB 140, is one of a number of bills being reviewed by the governor.

The consumer groups say if the bill becomes law it would expand the types of products that consumer finance companies can sell credit property insurance on in conjunction with a loan. Credit property insurance insures against damage or loss to property used to secure a loan; loan companies sell it along with other types of insurance, such as life insurance policies that pay off a loan if the borrower dies. Borrowers typically borrow the cost of the premiums as part of their loan.

Under state law, consumer finance loans can offer installment loans ranging up to \$15,000 at interest rates ranging from 18 to 30 percent, depending on the size of the loan.

The measure on credit property insurance surfaced in three different bills during this year's legislative session. It was stripped out from one after the consumer groups complained, Ripley said, but later was added to two otherwise unrelated bills following partisan votes -- with Republicans largely supporting and Democrats mostly opposing. (David Ranii, THE NEWS & OBSERVER, 7/10/17).

Voter Data

The federal voter fraud commission is asking states not to send any voter information to Washington while a judge considers a request to stop the data collection. North Carolina has not sent any voter information to the commission. It had planned to send information that is publicly available.

The Electronic Privacy Information Center is suing to stop the Presidential Advisory Commission on Election Integrity from collecting voter data. A federal judge held a hearing to consider a temporary restraining order last week. The presidential commission asked states' elections officials Monday not to send anything until the judge rules.

The request was sent to North Carolina's Bipartisan State Board of Elections and Ethics Enforcement. The federal commission also included it in a court document filed as part of the lawsuit. "Today, the Commission sent the states a follow-up communication requesting the states not submit any data until this Court rules on this TRO motion," commission vice-chairman Kris Kobach wrote in the court filing.

A letter from Kobach last month triggered a wave of protest. Though the letter asked for publicly available information, it included specific items that in many states are not public, such as partial Social Security numbers. The commission asked for the voter data by July 14. (Lynn Bonner, THE NEWS & OBSERVER, 7/10/17).

Highway Lighting

The N.C. Department of Transportation is making a \$32.3 million contract with Trane US to replace the state's highway lights with energy-efficient LED lights. The project, which appears on Tuesday's Council of State agenda, will take about 16 months and is expected to employ 120 people, including installers, engineers and factory workers at GE's Hendersonville plant. The project is part of the state's "performance contracting" program, which uses savings from energy efficiencies to pay for the cost of upgrades. Bank of America is providing financing for the project. (Colin Campbell, THE INSIDER, 7/11/17).

Lobbyist Fundraiser

Current lobbyist and former state Rep. Mike Hager is "hosting" a fundraiser for Lt. Gov. Dan Forest but says he hasn't broken the state law against political contributions by lobbyists. Good-government advocates say it's confusing and gives the appearance of impropriety. Hager, R-Rutherford, who served as House majority leader before resigning his seat last August, opened his lobbying firm, Hager Strategic Solutions, in February, after the six-month cooling-off period required by state law.

On Sunday, Hager posted on Facebook a flier for a private fundraiser for Forest, a Republican widely expected to consider a run for governor in 2020. As most fundraiser invitations do, this one includes a list of donors -- "sponsors" and "hosts" and "patrons," depending on how much they've contributed. Hager is listed as a "co-host" of the event, which, according to the flier, requires a \$1,000 contribution. "Please join me at the event below and you will understand my admiration for our Lt. Gov.," Hager commented.

North Carolina law prohibits lobbyists from donating to political campaigns, a change that was made in 2007 in the wake of a scandal involving former House Speaker Jim Black.

Hager, whose lobbyist registration was active as of Monday, denied having made a contribution. "I can't give any money to it. I'm going to congratulate him on his great success," he told WRAL News.

Asked whether his listing as a co-host might give people the impression that he had contributed, Hager shrugged it off. "I've never worried a whole lot about what people think," he responded. "It's the actuality of the law that we're complying with. That's the only issue I have."

A 2008 opinion by the State Board of Elections seems to back that up. In the opinion, requested by the North Carolina Professional Lobbyists Association, then-elections director Gary Bartlett clarified that lobbyists can solicit campaign contributions from other people as long as the legislature is not in session. During session, solicitation is banned. However, lawmakers recessed on June 30 for more than 10 days, so the ban is not currently in effect. "Hosting" a fundraiser is allowed, according to the Board of Elections, as long as no contribution is made, nothing of cash value is provided and the event doesn't take place at the lobbyist's home or office.

North Carolina Coalition for Lobbying and Government Reform director Jane Pinsky says that needs to change.

"Although the law prohibits Hager from making any contribution, this invitation would make anyone think he had contributed \$1,000 to the campaign," Pinsky said. "We need a firewall between lobbyists and the people they lobby when it comes to campaign contributions. Our current law needs to be reinforced so that lobbyists may not serve as hosts for fundraisers or put their names on invitations, even if they are not contributing money."(Laura Leslie, WRAL NEWS, 7/10/17).

Prison Sale

The Council of State is scheduled to vote Tuesday to sell a 35-acre former prison camp in Warren County. According to the agenda for the monthly Council of State meeting, Harris Investments Inc. has agreed to pay \$38,400 for the Warren County Correctional Facility property, which is located west of Warrenton and includes acres of timber. The company was the highest of only two bidders on the prison, which includes buildings in what the state terms "poor" condition after the facility closed in 1996 following 36 years of use. A new prison in Warren County opened shortly after the prison camp closed.(Colin Campbell, THE INSIDER, 7/11/17).

RDU Funds

Raleigh-Durham International Airport expects to undertake \$2.7 billion in renovations and upgrades in the next 25 years, but there are another \$2 billion in projects that the airport doesn't have money for.

RDU shared its plan for how it will pay for major projects at the airport through 2040 at an open house Monday. Officials and representatives answered questions from Triangle residents about what projects were slated to be completed during that time and where the money would come from.

Airport officials say more than \$900 million is needed just to maintain infrastructure, including replacing the airport's longest runway. They say another \$1.8 billion is needed for upgrades and expansions to terminals, parking and roadways, as well as to build a consolidated rental car facility. But there are about \$2 billion in additional projects that are being deferred beyond 2040. "We want to make people aware of how we are planning to pay for the next 25 years of investments and that there are some things we simply can't pay for that are identified as needs," RDU spokesman Andrew Sawyer said.

Deferred projects include extending the airport's shorter commercial runway, adding a public parking area to the yet-to-be-constructed consolidated rental car facility and enlarging Terminal 2, which will still undergo some expansion between now and then.

The reconstructed runway and the new consolidated rental car facility will be the priorities. The projects were laid out in Vision2040, the master plan the airport authority approved last October. Without it, RDU would be left with only one commercial runway, and at 7,500 feet, it isn't long enough to accommodate trans-Atlantic or trans-continental flights. A new runway also would be needed if the airport hopes to attract a flight to China.(Kathryn Trogdon, THE NEWS & OBSERVER, 7/10/17).

Distillery Rules

Charlotte diners who want to celebrate North Carolina's new rule allowing earlier sales of alcohol on Sundays have to wait until the City Council votes to allow it, which may take until the end of the month. But for visitors to the state's distilleries, which make liquor, the party has already started. "I got the news 10 minutes after the governor signed it," says Ollie Mulligan, the owner of Great Wagon Road Distilling. "It's huge for us."

While the so-called "brunch bill" allows alcohol sales as early as 10 a.m. on Sundays, some new provisions for distilleries also were in the bill. And those changes took effect immediately statewide.

The biggest: Instead of allowing people who tour distilleries to buy only one bottle per person per year, now they can buy up to five bottles a year. That's a big potential bump in on-site business -- and a move that may make the state's fast-growing distilling business, currently at about 40

distilleries statewide, grow even faster. Distillers also can now buy a permit that allows them to offer 1/4-ounce samples at festivals and events, also a big marketing tool.

"The announcement -- I get chills just thinking about it," says Robbie Delaney of Muddy River Distilling in Belmont. Delaney was actually leading a tour when they got the word that Gov. Roy Cooper had signed the new legislation. That meant the people on the tour could buy more bottles right then.

And they did, apparently. Less than a week after the bill was signed, Delaney said he's already seen a big jump in what people are buying on his tours. "It's actually awesome," he said. "I really didn't have that much confidence people would buy five bottles given the opportunity. But man, when we told them they could buy five bottles a year, I didn't realize how many people were from out of town," and so are choosing to buy it all right then.

Distillers say they're eager to expand hours in their tasting rooms and gift shops. Those are good marketing tools and help them develop customers who will then look for their products at state-run ABC stores. But capping visitors at a single bottle a year makes it hard to do that profitably, or to even break even. Before the new legislation passed, George Smith of Copper Barrel Distilling in North Wilkesboro said he was losing money on his gift shop and had to cut some jobs.

Now, distillers are already making plans to adjust to the higher bottle limit. "We'll probably get more help," says Delaney. "It's time to start opening for regular hours," instead of just on weekends. "Anything we can do to make it easier for customers to buy our product is good for us." The majority of distilleries sales still will depend on the state-controlled ABC system and county-run ABC stores.(Kathleen Purvis, THE CHARLOTTE OBSERVER, 7/10/17).

OBX Alcohol Sales

Kill Devil Hills commissioners did not hesitate Monday night to sign off on a new state law that allows beer, wine and mixed drink sales starting at 10 a.m. Sunday morning. Only three people commented on the local ordinance required by the state's new "Brunch Bill," which moves the restriction back from noon, and they all favored it. A short time later, the Board of Commissioners approved it unanimously without discussion.

"The brunch bill is not only popular with restaurants and employees, but also with our guests, the lifeblood of our tourism economy, many of whom come from states that have already removed these restrictions," said Dan Lewis, president of the Outer Banks Restaurant Association.

Things have not gone as smoothly in Nags Head, where commissioners voted down an unscheduled motion Wednesday to approve Sunday morning alcohol sales, then recessed a special meeting two days later to allow for public comment. They will take it up again on July 19.

Meanwhile in Kitty Hawk Monday, the City Council also was unanimous in approving the change, but not without some reservations. "I personally don't know what the people of Kitty Hawk feel about this," said Councilman Jeff Pruitt. "We've been put in the situation by the state to pick and choose. It's kind of a passing the buck situation."(Rob Morris, THE OUTER BANKS VOICE, 7/10/17).

Farm Jobs

Every April, about 30 immigrants board a bus in Mexico and travel nearly 2,000 miles to Jackie Thompson's farm in Rolesville, where they harvest roughly 600,000 pounds of tobacco. It's an agreement that can help everyone involved: Immigrants need money to provide for their families, and Thompson needs help to run his 900-acre farm. Every year he sells tobacco, 18,000 pounds of soybeans, 25 bushels of wheat and 10,000 bushels of cucumbers to tobacco companies and commercial food producers. About 80,000 farm workers -- primarily Latino migrants and immigrants as well as U.S. natives -- toil on farms in North Carolina, where agriculture still plays a major role, according to the N.C. Farm Bureau. Advocacy groups put that number closer to 150,000. Roughly half are undocumented immigrants, although many have been living in North Carolina for decades, according to the bureau. About 25 percent come to work in the U.S. temporarily through the federal H-2A visa program. Only one-fourth of the state's farm workers, a mix of immigrants and U.S. nationals, live in North Carolina permanently. They are an invisible workforce that props up North Carolina's \$84 billion agriculture industry.

Without immigrants, Thompson couldn't run his farm. "There's no doubt in my mind," Thompson, 66, said. "The U.S. complains with our mouths full. They want to eat it, but they don't want to pick it."

In February, Larry Wooten, president of the N.C. Farm Bureau, and a group of farmers met with Tillis, Sen. Richard Burr, Rep. George Holding, Rep. David Rouzer, Rep. Ted Budd and Rep. Mark Meadows, all Republicans, to discuss immigration reform, simplifying the H-2A program and determining an avenue to legal status for undocumented farm workers.

Wooten describes immigration reform as a "three-legged stool": the first leg represents border security to ensure "we know who's in the country" and the second leg involves developing an H-2A program that supplies dependable labor year-round. "The third leg is where the wheel runs off and the divergence starts: What do you do with illegal immigrants?" Wooten said. "It's a tremendous cost to the economy because this immigration issue is not resolved."

Employers apply for a temporary labor certification for H-2A workers from the U.S. Department of Labor and then file petitions for workers with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. After the petitions are approved, prospective workers from roughly 85 approved countries outside the U.S. apply for H-2A visas at a U.S. embassy or consulate abroad. There's no cap on the number of H-2A visas issued annually. More than 134,000 were issued last year -- an increase of 321 percent from 2005 and the highest number of H-2A visas ever, according to the Economic Policy Institute. Before they can hire workers through the program, farmers must first try to recruit locally. But many say they don't have much luck. "We just don't have the local labor here to work the farms," Wooten said. "We wouldn't be able to run without immigrant labor. It's that simple, and it's a lot more than just agriculture."

A 2013 study by the Center for Global Development analyzed more than a decade's worth of data from North Carolina farms and found that "no matter how bad the economy becomes, native workers do not take farm jobs."(Madison Iszler, THE NEWS & OBSERVER, 7/09/10).

CFO Departing

The chief financial officer of the Charlotte Regional Partnership has departed after an audit found "sloppy accounting" at the economic development group, CEO Ronnie Bryant said Monday. Melissa Hendrick left the partnership June 30, and the group plans to outsource accounting functions going forward, Bryant said. The auditors found no money missing, he said.

"There were some issues regarding what I would call sloppy accounting," Bryant told the Observer. "We did a full five-year audit in an effort to ensure that there were no funds missing. It's just a matter of untimely deposits and some other accounting issues that were just not timely." When reached by the Observer, Hendrick declined to comment. Bryant called the departure a "mutual separation."

The group paid Hendrick \$132,325 in total compensation in 2015, according to its most recent 990 filing with the IRS. Bryant would not say whether she received any severance as part of her departure.(Rick Rothacker, THE CHARLOTTE OBSERVER, 7/10/17).

Tillis Numbers

Less than three years ago, the sitting speaker of the North Carolina House won the most expensive U.S. Senate race in history, ousting the incumbent Democrat to claim Jesse Helms' old seat. So how is it that roughly three in 10 North Carolina residents either don't know who Thom Tillis is or don't have an opinion on the first-term senator from Huntersville?

A three-month survey conducted by Morning Consult found that 30 percent of voters in the state didn't know or didn't have an opinion on Tillis, the second highest total of the 99 senators tracked. Only Michigan Democrat Gary Peters had a higher number. The survey, whose results were released in April, found that 37 percent of voters approved of Tillis' job performance, tied with Peters for the lowest number in the survey.

It was just the first recent poll to place Tillis' numbers far below the 49 percent he achieved in the 2014 vote. An Elon University poll released in early May and a Public Policy Polling poll released this month both found Tillis with 29 percent job approval.

Tillis hasn't had the large, attention-grabbing platform that his fellow North Carolina Republican, Sen. Richard Burr, has as chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee that is leading the way

on investigating Russia's meddling in the 2016 election. Neither has been a big player on the health care bill that is soaking up much of the time and attention in the Senate.

"It's just a big expensive state where it takes a lot of work to get name identification," said strategist John Anzalone, who worked on Democrat Kay Hagan's senatorial campaigns in 2008 and 2014, when Tillis defeated her by fewer than 50,000 votes.

The share of voters who disapprove of Tillis varied widely in the results: 30 percent according to Morning Consult, 39 percent according to Elon and 47 percent according to Public Policy Polling, a Raleigh-based Democratic firm.

Those around Tillis don't acknowledge any alarm at the ratings, pointing out that Hagan faced similar numbers at this point in her term. An October 2009 Elon poll had Hagan at 35 percent approval and 35 percent disapproval, with 29 percent of respondents saying they did not know. Burr, at this point in his second term in 2011, had 42 percent job approval ratings.

"You've got to recalibrate your thinking when it comes to North Carolina. An incumbent above the 40-percent threshold is a strong incumbent in North Carolina. The old 50-percent threshold when it comes to ballot tests doesn't hold water," Republican strategist Paul Shumaker, who worked on Tillis' successful 2014 campaign as well as Burr's 2010 and 2016 senatorial victories, said. "I've seen nothing in Tillis' numbers that are concerning to me at all, given the timeline we have to operate with."(Brian Murphy, MCCLATCHY DC, 7/10/17).

Dinosaur Funds

Once, major funding to expand the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences' popular dinosaur exhibit roamed the pages of North Carolina's newest state budget. Now, that money is nearly extinct. The cause? The General Assembly's annual technical corrections bill, which made dozens of changes to the two-year budget less than two weeks after the full budget emerged from House and Senate negotiations.

Language that once laid out \$1.5 million to improve the exhibit and the visible-to-the-public paleontology laboratory that goes with it, was massaged in the technical corrections bill, siphoning out about \$1.23 million. Museum officials said they're not sure why. The legislature has been generous in the past with the museum, which is open free of charge in part due to state taxpayer subsidies.

Repeated attempts to track down the reasoning for or the author of this cut have not been successful. House Appropriations Senior Chairman Nelson Dollar, R-Wake, referred questions to House Speaker Tim Moore's office, but Moore's spokesman did not respond to messages.

"Disappointed and surprised," said Keith Poston, president of the museum's board of directors, said of the late-breaking cut. The money would have been used to make the paleontology lab "bigger and more visible" to visitors and to draw people in from the street, Poston said. The project will still happen eventually, he said, and the museum will seek both public and private funds. Meanwhile, the exhibit as-is remains open. "It may take a little bit longer," Poston said. "This is the most visited place in the state, and everybody loves dinosaurs."(Travis Fain, WRAL NEWS, 7/10/17).

Food Policy

Duke University announced a new center Monday to work on global food policy solutions with \$5.9 million in grants. The World Food Policy Center will be based at Duke's Sanford School of Public Policy. The new push will be funded by \$5 million from the Charlotte-based Duke Endowment, \$600,000 from the William R. Kenan Jr. Charitable Trust and \$300,000 from the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina Foundation. The center will promote collaboration across different food research areas such as malnutrition, obesity, agriculture, climate change and safety issues related to contamination or bioterrorism.

Universities are putting greater emphasis on research about how to feed the growing global population and build sustainable food supplies. In 2015, the UN estimated the number of hungry people globally at 795 million, or one in nine people worldwide. In May, a commission of the Association of Public Land-grant Universities issued a report on a coordinated approach to food and nutrition security, involving public research universities, governments, the private sector and non-governmental organizations.

The Challenge of Change Commission, led by N.C. State University Chancellor Randy Woodson, identified seven challenges, such as increasing crop yields, creating equitable food systems and decreasing food waste through better distribution. It called for a number of steps, including better collaboration among researchers in different fields, more capacity for universities to help low-income countries and better use of technology and data or make production more sustainable and efficient. (Jane Stancill, THE NEWS & OBSERVER, 7/10/17).

Running

Graham Wilson, who served as press secretary for Gov. Pat McCrory, is running for office. Wilson filed Friday to run for the Apex Town Council, where he'll face a contested race for three available seats. Wilson was the press secretary from July 2015 until McCrory left office, and he also worked in the Department of Commerce under McCrory. He is the former executive director of the Apex Chamber of Commerce. (Colin Campbell, THE INSIDER, 7/11/17).

Congressional Challenger

The founder of a new vodka distillery is challenging U.S. Rep. George Holding of Raleigh. Sam Searcy, a 40-year-old Holly Springs resident and a Democrat, announced his candidacy Monday morning. "I feel like our representation in North Carolina's 2nd District is completely out of touch with what people go through in the district," said Searcy, who has four young children. "My set of life experiences and business experiences are a better fit. I understand what people go through. I've been at the table when you're trying to figure out how to afford to put your second kid in day care."

Searcy is hoping to present a contrast with Holding, who comes from a prominent banking family in the Triangle and who the Center for Responsive Politics estimates is worth more than \$6 million. Holding is in his third term as a congressman. He represented the 13th District for two terms, but ran in the 2nd District in 2016 after redistricting and defeated incumbent and fellow Republican Renee Ellmers in 2016. Holding defeated John McNeil in the general election, winning more than 56 percent of the vote.

Searcy grew up in Hendersonville in the western part of the state in a working-class family that, at times, struggled to pay their bills, he said. He graduated from Appalachian State -- the first in his family to graduate from a four-year college, he said -- before earning his law degree at the University of Tulsa in Oklahoma. He moved back to the Triangle and worked in clinical research before deciding to open Greybeard Distillery and produce Bedlam Vodka with two other owners. Searcy said the vodka, produced from rice, is available in all North Carolina ABC stores. He said the company now has about 10 employees. (Brian Murphy, MCCLATCHY DC, 7/10/17).

Tropical Winds

Nearly 200,000 households in the eastern half of North Carolina may be living in manufactured homes that weren't designed for the winds a powerful hurricane could bring, because federal wind zone maps that govern manufactured housing are decades out of date. Safety experts say the industry has resisted updating the maps, which are based on data from the 1970s and use a wind metric the National Weather Service abandoned more than 20 years ago. Updating the maps -- to reflect the stronger winds that come farther inland -- could more than double the number of North Carolina counties where manufactured houses would have to be built stronger and anchored more securely to withstand the high winds that come with tropical storms. Newer maps also indicate several counties along the coast are likely to receive more powerful winds than the existing maps show.

Manufacturers say that there is no evidence the change is needed and that the cost of conforming to higher wind standards -- from about \$500 to \$2,000 for a new single-wide home, plus increased installation expenses -- would push many buyers out of the market for an affordable home.

HUD's map for manufactured housing is designed to protect primarily against winds from tropical storms and hurricanes, using historical data to determine the probability of such winds in the future. This year's Atlantic hurricane season, which started June 1 and runs through Nov. 30, is expected to be about average, with 12 named storms, including five hurricanes, at least three of them Category 3 with winds of more than 110 mph. Though hurricanes spawn tornadoes, neither

HUD's map nor those for site-built homes account for tornadoes, which are regarded as so unpredictable and violent that no design can effectively protect against a direct hit. But there are major differences between HUD's maps for manufactured housing and those used for site-built homes.

In North Carolina, the biggest difference in the maps is this: HUD's map, drawn using data collected four decades ago, puts only the easternmost 19 of the state's 100 counties into Zone II or Zone III, where manufactured houses must be designed to withstand tropical-storm-force winds. Every other county is in Zone I.

According to census data, the 28 counties included in the state residential building code wind zone map -- and left out of HUD's wind regulations for manufactured housing -- have an estimated 198,380 manufactured houses in which more than half a million people live. Wake County, for example, which has more than 14,000 manufactured homes, is one of those. (Martha Quillin, THE NEWS & OBSERVER, 7/07/17).

Driver Training

Spurred by recent deaths of bicyclists, the Wilmington Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization wants drivers to receive more training. The WMPO board recently approved a resolution requesting that the N.C. Department of Transportation improve the N.C. Driver's Handbook to include more "comprehensive instruction" on rules of the road when it comes to bicyclists and pedestrians.

Pat Batleman, a member of the WMPO board and a Leland councilwoman, said due to the number of accidents recently, she believed it was time to bring more awareness to the issue of safety on the roads with drivers, bikers and pedestrians. "This is really getting very tragic," Batleman said. "You've got more and more people on bikes and it's been pretty much ignored and we can't do it anymore. Biking is just becoming too popular."

Three bicyclist deaths have occurred this year, two in Wilmington and one on U.S. 17 in Leland, the resolution also said 285 bicycle crashes and six fatalities, as well as 373 pedestrian crashes and 36 fatalities, have occurred within the WMPO boundary between 2007 and 2014. (Makenzie Holland, WILMINGTON STAR-NEWS, 7/10/17).

Winterville Candidate

A Winterville mayoral candidate said neither a long-ago criminal conviction on a death by motor vehicle charge nor his family ties to a long-serving town councilman should disqualify him from running. Ashley Tucker Moore, 42, filed Friday to run for the office of Winterville mayor. He will appear on the ballot as Tucker Moore. Ten years ago Moore was the driver in single vehicle wreck that killed Taft Lee Noland, 29, and seriously injured two others. Moore was convicted Feb. 5, 2008, on one count of felony death by vehicle and two counts of felony serious injury by vehicle. He was released May 2011 and completed nine months of probation.

"No day goes by that you do not think about it. I was lucky enough to get a second chance in a sense where another wasn't," Moore said in a written statement. "What happened was a terrible decision on my part and I took full responsibility for what happened. It was a humbling experience. You learn from these things, you grow and you look for ways to make the future better." Because of that experience, Moore is a proponent of the "ban the box" movement, which would remove from hiring applications a check box that asks applicants if they have a criminal record. The goal is to allow employees to learn about a person's qualifications before inquiring about a possible criminal background.

Moore is the son of Tony Moore, a long-time Winterville councilman and one-term state senator. Tony Moore's current term ends in 2019, meaning they could serve at least two years together. The younger Moore said he sees no conflict in having two members of the same family serving on the town council.

Moore is the first person to file for mayor. Current Mayor Doug Jackson said he is still weighing his options. Jackson has served 20 years as mayor. (Ginger Livingston, THE (Greenville) DAILY REFLECTOR, 7/10/17).

School Embezzlement

A former Brunswick County Board of Education member was found guilty in June of embezzling from the Parent Teacher Association at Monroe Elementary, while serving as the association's president. Raymond Carl Gilbert, 50, of Ash was found guilty on June 30 of two counts of embezzlement following a trial that began on June 27. The jury deliberated for an hour on June 29 and for about five hours on June 30 before reaching a verdict, Brunswick County Assistant District Attorney Jacob Ward said. According to a 2013 article by The Fayetteville Observer, Gilbert was accused of taking \$1,128 from the school's PTA during the 2011-2012 school year, and another \$2,550 from the 2012-2013 school year. (Hannah DelaCourt, WILMINGTON STAR-NEWS, 7/10/17).

Soccer Visit

As Major League Soccer officials consider whether to award Charlotte an expansion team, league President Mark Abbott is scheduled to visit the city next week. He's expected to meet with Mecklenburg Commissioners, who will vote in August on whether to spend more than \$110 million in up-front money for a new soccer-specific stadium in Elizabeth. Charlotte is one of 12 cities vying for four new franchises. MLS officials have already visited some cities, including Nashville last week.

Mecklenburg manager Dena Diorio told commissioners in an e-mail Monday that Abbott will be in town on July 18 "for a series of events." Abbott, she said, is hoping to meet with commissioners that morning. It's unclear whether the county plans for the meeting to be public. If the meeting is held behind closed doors, a majority of commissioners could not meet with Abbott simultaneously under the state's open meetings laws.

Over the last year, the MLS has also visited Phoenix, San Diego, St. Louis, Detroit, Sacramento, Cincinnati and San Antonio. Along with Charlotte, the other bidding cities the MLS has not yet visited include Indianapolis, Raleigh/Durham and Tampa/St. Petersburg.

MLS has said it plans to award at least two new franchises this year. It's possible the soccer league could award all four franchises in 2017, or the league could wait until 2018 or 2019 to finish expanding. (Steve Harrison and Katherine Peralta, THE CHARLOTTE OBSERVER, 7/10/17).

WNC Filings

By Monday afternoon 10 people had filed to run for offices in Asheville and in other municipal elections around Buncombe County. Filing opened at noon July 7. In Asheville, Mayor Esther Manheimer had signed up to defend her seat, using the opportunity to highlight accomplishments, including defending the state takeover of the city water system and passage of \$74 million in voter-approved bond borrowing.

For City Council, incumbent Cecil Bothwell had filed as well as challenger Jeremy Goldstein. Bothwell said he would push back against money interests and work to limit climate change, which he called "an existential threat to modern civilization." Goldstein is the founder and principal agent of the G/M Property Group, described as "the boutique commercial real estate firm" of Asheville, and chairman of the city's planning and zoning commission.

If there are more than two mayoral candidates, a primary for that office will be held to narrow the November ballot to two candidates. For council there will be three seats on the ballot. Any more than six candidates will trigger a council primary. (Joel Burgess, ASHEVILLE CITIZEN-TIMES, 7/10/17).

Spring Lake Mayor

Chris Rey announced this morning that he will not seek a fourth term as Spring Lake's mayor. Rey, 39, posted a release on his Facebook page in which he cited the demands of a new assignment in the National Guard. "In the coming months, the demands of my new National Guard assignment will increase and leave me less time to give the Mayor's office the dedication that it so justly deserves," Rey said in the statement. Rey was 34, the youngest mayor in Spring Lake's history, when he was first elected in 2011. Rey cited accomplishments during his tenure as the growth of Spring Lake's business community and improvements to infrastructure as well as working to develop affordable housing and saving the town's industrial park. "Our town is on a positive trajectory and I cannot wait to see what happens next. I will be right there in the front row cheering for our town." (Nancy McCleary, THE FAYETTEVILLE OBSERVER, 7/10/17).

Country Club Sale

ClubCorp, owner of Bermuda Run Country Club in Davie County and several other clubs across North Carolina, said Monday it is being sold for \$1.1 billion in cash to a New York investment group. Apollo Global Management Group LLC said its offer represents a 30.7 percent premium over ClubCorp's closing share price on Friday, or \$17.12 compared to \$13.10. The deal requires the approval of ClubCorp shareholders and is projected to close in the fourth quarter.

ClubCorp acquired Bermuda Run Country Club in March 2015 as part of a six-property purchase worth about \$44 million. At that time, ClubCorp, based in Dallas, owned 10 North Carolina golf course and 13 overall properties in the state. ClubCorp said it did not have comment beyond the news release, including when asked whether the planned sale would affect the country club. ClubCorp ended its affiliation with The Piedmont Club, which was on the 19th floor of the BB&T Financial Center, in downtown Winston-Salem, when its lease for the space expired in March. ClubCorp had managed the club since its founding in March 1987. Jerde said Jan. 11 that ClubCorp had made a business decision to close the club.

ClubCorp also runs the City Club Raleigh and the Carolina Club in Chapel Hill, as well as golf and country clubs in Charlotte, Cary and Clayton, according to its website. (Richard Craver, WINSTON-SALEM JOURNAL, 7/10/17).

Legislative Studies and Meetings

Items in **Bold** are new listings.

LB: Legislative Building

LOB: Legislative Office Building.

More Information: <http://ncleg.net/LegislativeCalendar/>

Thursday, Aug. 3

- Noon | House convenes in session.
- Noon | Senate convenes in session.

N.C. Government Meetings and Hearings

Items in **BOLD** are new listings.

Tuesday, July 11

- 8 a.m. | The NC Board of Funeral Service Traineeship Committee meets, 1033 Wade Avenue, Suite 108, Raleigh.
- 8:30 a.m. | The state Board of Examiners of Plumbing, Heating & Fire Sprinkler Contractors Formal Hearing meets, 1109 Dresser Ct., Board Room, Raleigh.
- CANCELLED - 8:30 a.m. | The Fund Development and Communications Committee of The North Carolina Partnership for Children, Inc. meets, 1100 Wake Forest Road, Raleigh. Contact: Yvonne Huntley, [919-821-9573](tel:919-821-9573).
- 9 a.m. | The N.C. Commission for Public Health hold public hearing on proposed rule changes, Cardinal Room, 5605 Six Forks Road, Raleigh.
- 9 a.m. | The N.C. Council of State meets, Commission Room 5034, Fifth floor of the Administration Building, 116 West Jones St., Raleigh.
- 9 a.m. | The N.C. Board of Pharmacy meets, 6015 Farrington Road, Board Room Suite 201, Chapel Hill.
- 9 a.m. | The state Board of Funeral Service meets, 1033 Wade Avenue, Suite 108, Raleigh.
- 10 a.m. | The N.C. Coastal Resources Commission Variance meets (if necessary), DCM Regional Offices, Wilmington.
- 11 a.m. | The UNC Campus Security Committee: Subcommittee on Data Collection Protocol meets, Conference Room B, Spangler Building, Chapel Hill. Contact: Josh Ellis, [919-962-4629](tel:919-962-4629).

- 1 p.m. | The North Carolina Coastal Resources Commission meets to discuss flood maps, coastal resilience, and land use planning, Holiday Inn, 203 S.W. Greenville Boulevard, Greenville.
- 2:30 p.m. | The N.C. Local Government Commission meets, 3200 Atlantic Ave., Longleaf Building, Raleigh.

Wednesday, July 12

- 9 a.m. | The state Consumer and Family Advisory Committee of DHHS meets, Biggs Dr., Raleigh.
- 9 a.m. | Environmental Management Commission meets, Ground Floor Hearing Room, Archdale Building, 512 N. Salisbury St., Raleigh.
- 12 p.m. | The UNC Campus Security Committee: Subcommittee on Security Training Conference meets, Conference Room B, Spangler Building, Chapel Hill. Contact: Josh Ellis, [919-962-4629](tel:919-962-4629).

Thursday, July 13

- 9 a.m. | Environmental Management Commission meets, Ground Floor Hearing Room, Archdale Building, 512 N. Salisbury St., Raleigh.

Friday, July 14

- 9 a.m. | The N.C. Board of Architecture hold public hearing on proposed rule changes, 127 W. Hargett St., #304, Raleigh.

Monday, July 17

- 11 a.m. | The Executive Committee of The North Carolina Partnership for Children meets, 1100 Wake Forest Road, Raleigh. Contact: Yvonne Huntley, [919-821-9573](tel:919-821-9573).

Tuesday, July 18

- 1:30 p.m. | The Accountability Committee of The North Carolina Partnership for Children meets, 1100 Wake Forest Road, Raleigh. Contact: Yvonne Huntley, [919-821-9573](tel:919-821-9573).

Wednesday, July 19

- **9 a.m. | The N.C. Plant Conservation Board meets, N.C. Cooperative Extension Service Watauga County Center Conference, Room 971 W. King St., Boone.**

Thursday, July 20

- 10 a.m. | The N.C. Rules Review Commission meets, Administrative Hearings office, Rules Review Commission Room, 1711 New Hope Church Road, Raleigh.

Tuesday, July 25

- 9 a.m. | The N.C. Code Officials Qualification Board holds public hearing on proposed rule changes, 1st Floor Hearing Room, Room 131 (Albemarle Building), 325 N. Salisbury St., Raleigh.
- 1 p.m. | The Board Development Committee of The North Carolina Partnership for Children meets, 1100 Wake Forest Road, Raleigh. Contact: Yvonne Huntley, [919-821-9573](tel:919-821-9573).

Thursday, July 27

- 9 a.m. | The NC Wildlife Resources Commission meets, WRC Centennial Campus, 1751 Varsity Dr., Raleigh.

Monday, July 31

- 12 p.m. | The N.C. State Board of Elections hold public hearing on proposed rule changes, State Board of Elections Office, 441 N. Harrington St., Raleigh.

Tuesday, Aug. 1

- **12 p.m. | The UNC Board of Governors' Committee on Educational Planning, Policies, and Programs, Board Room of the Center for School Leadership Development, 140 Friday Center Dr., Chapel Hill. Contact: Josh Ellis, [919-962-4629](tel:919-962-4629).**

Thursday, Aug. 3

- TBD | The Golden LEAF Foundation's board meets, TBD. Contact: Jenny Tinklepaugh, [888-684-8404](tel:888-684-8404).

Wednesday, Aug. 16

- 10:30 a.m. | The Criminal Justice Education and Training Standards Commission holds public hearing on proposed rule changes, Wake Technical Community College-Public Safety Training Center, 321 Chapanoke Road, Raleigh.

Thursday, Aug. 17

- 10 a.m. | The N.C. Rules Review Commission meets, Administrative Hearings office, Rules Review Commission Room, 1711 New Hope Church Road, Raleigh.

Wednesday, Sept. 13

- 9 a.m. | Environmental Management Commission meets, Ground Floor Hearing Room, Archdale Building, 512 N. Salisbury St., Raleigh.

Thursday, Sept. 14

- 9 a.m. | Environmental Management Commission meets, Ground Floor Hearing Room, Archdale Building, 512 N. Salisbury St., Raleigh.

Thursday, Sept. 21

- 10 a.m. | The N.C. Rules Review Commission meets, Administrative Hearings office, Rules Review Commission Room, 1711 New Hope Church Road, Raleigh.

Thursday, Sept. 28

- 10:30 a.m. | The Standard Commercial Fishing License Eligibility Board to the N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries meets, N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries' Wilmington District Office, 127 North Cardinal Dr. Extension, Wilmington.

Thursday, Oct. 5

- TBD | The Golden LEAF Foundation's board meets, TBD. Contact: Jenny Tinklepaugh, [888-684-8404](tel:888-684-8404).
- TBD | The NC Wildlife Resources Commission meets, WRC Centennial Campus, 1751 Varsity Dr., Raleigh.

Thursday, Oct. 19

- 10 a.m. | The N.C. Rules Review Commission meets, Administrative Hearings office, Rules Review Commission Room, 1711 New Hope Church Road, Raleigh.

Wednesday, Nov. 8

- 9 a.m. | Environmental Management Commission meets, Ground Floor Hearing Room, Archdale Building, 512 N. Salisbury St., Raleigh.

Thursday, Nov. 9

- 9 a.m. | Environmental Management Commission meets, Ground Floor Hearing Room, Archdale Building, 512 N. Salisbury St., Raleigh.

Thursday, Nov. 16

- 10 a.m. | The N.C. Rules Review Commission meets, Administrative Hearings office, Rules Review Commission Room, 1711 New Hope Church Road, Raleigh.

Thursday, Dec. 7

- TBD | The Golden LEAF Foundation's board meets, TBD. Contact: Jenny Tinklepaugh, [888-684-8404](tel:888-684-8404).
- TBD | The NC Wildlife Resources Commission meets, 1751 Varsity Dr., Raleigh.

Thursday, Dec. 21

- 10 a.m. | The N.C. Rules Review Commission meets, Administrative Hearings office, Rules Review Commission Room, 1711 New Hope Church Road, Raleigh.

Wednesday, Jan. 10

- 9 a.m. | Environmental Management Commission meets, Ground Floor Hearing Room, Archdale Building, 512 N. Salisbury St., Raleigh.

Thursday, Jan. 11

- 9 a.m. | Environmental Management Commission meets, Ground Floor Hearing Room, Archdale Building, 512 N. Salisbury St., Raleigh.

N.C. Dept. of Environmental Quality

The N.C. Dept. of Environment and Natural Resources has a new name - the N.C. Dept. of Environmental Quality. More Information: <http://portal.ncdenr.org/web/guest/home>

Tuesday, July 18

- **6 p.m. | The N.C. Division of Water Resources hold public meeting on Atlantic Coast Pipeline Water Quality Certification, Fayetteville Technical Community College Cumberland Hall Auditorium at 2201 Hull Rd., Fayetteville.**

Thursday, July 20

- **6 p.m. | The N.C. Division of Water Resources hold public meeting on Atlantic Coast Pipeline Water Quality Certification, Nash Community College Brown Auditorium at 522 N. Old Carriage Road, Rocky Mount.**

Thursday, Aug. 3

- **2 p.m. | The state Department on Air Quality holds public hearing concerning incorporation of 2015 Ozone Ambient Standard and Readoption, 2145 Suttle Ave., Charlotte.**

N.C. Utilities Commission Hearing Schedule

Dobbs Building
430 North Salisbury Street
Raleigh, North Carolina
More Information: <http://www.ncuc.commerce.state.nc.us/activities/activit.htm>

Tuesday, July 11

- **9:30 a.m. | T-4635 Sub 0 ...Application For Certificate of Exemption to Transport Household Goods, Dobbs - Commission Hearing Room, 2nd floor, Room 2115.**

Monday, July 17

- Staff Conference

Monday, July 24

- Staff Conference

Monday, July 31

- Staff Conference

UNC Board of Governors

Board Room of the UNC Center for School Leadership Development
140 Friday Center Drive, Chapel Hill (**remote meeting locations in BOLD**)
More Information: <https://www.northcarolina.edu/bog/schedule.php>

Thursday, July 13

- **3:30 p.m. | The UNC Board of Governors, Mountain View Conference Room of the Sherrill Center, University of North Carolina at Asheville, Asheville.**

Friday, July 14

- 9 a.m. | The UNC Board of Governors meets, Room 102, in the Reuter Center of the University of North Carolina at Asheville, Asheville.

Tuesday, Aug. 1

- 12 p.m. | The Board of Governors' Committee on Educational Planning, Policies, and Programs, Board Room of the Center for School Leadership Development, 140 Friday Center Dr., Chapel Hill.

Friday, Sept. 8

- TBA | The UNC Board of Governors, C.S.L.D. Building, Chapel Hill.

Friday, Nov. 3

- TBA | The UNC Board of Governors, C.S.L.D. Building, Chapel Hill.

Friday, Dec. 15

- TBA | The UNC Board of Governors, C.S.L.D. Building, Chapel Hill.

Friday, Jan. 26, 2018

- TBA | The UNC Board of Governors, C.S.L.D. Building, Chapel Hill.

Friday, March 23, 2018

- TBA | UNC Wilmington, Wilmington.

Friday, May 25, 2018

- TBA | The UNC Board of Governors, C.S.L.D. Building, Chapel Hill.

Other Meetings and Events of Interest

Items in **BOLD** are new listings.

Tuesday, July 11

- **9 a.m. | Gov. Roy Cooper to preside over the Council of State meeting, North Carolina Department of Administration, 5th Floor, 116 W Jones St, Raleigh.**
- **11 a.m. | Gov. Roy Cooper to sign Britny's Law and other domestic violence prevention bills into law, Executive Residence, 200 N. Blount St, Raleigh.**

Sunday, July 30

- TBD | The NC Bankers Association host 81st Annual NC School of Banking, William & Ida Friday Center, UNC-Chapel Hill. The conference concludes on Aug. 4.

Friday, Sept. 8

- No Time Given | The 77th Annual National Folk Festival opens in Downtown Greensboro for its third year in the state. Contact: Kaitlin Smith, [336-373-7523](tel:336-373-7523), ext 246.

Sunday, Sept. 24

- TBD | The NC Bankers Association hold Young Bankers Conference, Crowne Plaza Asheville Resort, Asheville.

Wednesday, Oct. 11

- 10 a.m. | The Carolinas Air Pollution Control Association hold Technical Workshop and Forum, Hilton Myrtle Beach Resort, 10000 Beach Club Dr., Myrtle Beach.

Monday, Nov. 6

- TBD | The NC Bankers Association hold Women in Banking Conference, Renaissance Charlotte Southpark, 5501 Carnegie Blvd., Charlotte.

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